

E. Bartholet

Yakima Chamber of Commerce

Chamber of Commerce Building

Yakima, Washington

via AIR MAIL

June 21, 1943

Keep This.

Miss Patricia K. Page
Wartime Merchant Shipping Limited
420 Lagauchetiere Street West
Montreal, Canada

My dear Miss Page:

This will acknowledge yours of June 12th and I have imposed upon Mrs. J. J. Bartholet, 2201 Summitview Avenue, this city, to prepare a short story on Fort Simcoe, which I believe will give you the background desired and which brings out many points heretofore unknown to me.

You will note particularly the knowledge that she relates concerning the early history of Fort Simcoe and its connection with the British Government and the Hudson Bay Company. Mrs. Bartholet has done much research work in connection with Fort Simcoe, as well as having resided at the Fort when she was a small girl.

Although I have not discussed this with Mrs. Bartholet and, while I have no knowledge as to the policy of your company, I am going to be sufficiently presumptuous to urge that you ask your officials to consider extending an invitation to Mrs. Bartholet to christen the vessel to be named "Fort Simcoe", if it is decided that it is to be adopted. While it would necessitate the expense of a trip for Mrs. Bartholet from here to Montreal and return, nevertheless I have found that she is thoroughly acquainted with the early history of Simcoe and the Hudson Bay Company and will prove an Ambassador of good will for Canada and the ship building company as she has glowing reports of the fair dealings made by the Hudson Bay Company and the English people, who in the early days conducted considerable business in the area through the Hudson Bay people.

You may rest assured that Mrs. Bartholet is a charming, cultured lady and, if this suggestion is followed, would add dignity and sincerity to such an event. It is customary for American ship building firms to follow that line of procedure which accounts for my suggesting that it be given consideration by the officials of the Wartime Merchant Shipping Limited.

Very sincerely yours,

GCB:ed
Encl.

GEO. C. BAER
M A N A G E R

My dear Miss Page:

(Sicco Company)

Mr. Baer, secretary of our Chamber of Commerce, told me that you wish a more detailed account of Fort Simcoe, whose name you will soon give to a ship, than the one the Chamber sent. Since I have written a little book about the Fort, which has never been published, I was given the joyful task of writing the following story, which I hope is not too protracted and sentimental to suit your needs. It is taken from parts of my book.

So I'm requesting! - for

A Story of Fort Simcoe.

I

"Where ere you walk --- trees crowd into a shade."

Fort Simcoe, situated in the central part of Washington State, on the Yakima Indian Reservation, was established by Major Robert Selden Garnett of Virginia in 1856, as a protection for the white settlers against Indian depredations. The Fort was named for Maj. Gen. John George ^{Graves} Simcoe, British officer, and Lieut. Governor of Ontario. Why Fort Simcoe was named for the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario is not clear. But we do know that Mr. ^{Dr.} McLaughlin, Hudson's Bay factor, who lived on the Columbia River, was the friend and protector of the early United States settlers in that part of the country. We know that he was greatly beloved by those settlers and that their descendants have restored his home and ~~that~~ it is a loved and venerated shrine of our Northwest. It is very probably that it was for some such reason that Fort Simcoe was given General Simcoe's name.

The spot on which Fort Simcoe was established had formerly been the favorite summer camp ground of the Indians, and was the crossroad of all the old Indian trails of that part of the country. Indian legend tells that in the very early days, before United States settlers began pouring in, and before it became a United States army post, British army officers and Hudson's Bay officials often camped there with the friendly Indians, stopping overnight in their travels.

While it is true that the main reason for establishing the Fort at this spot was the crossing of the trails, there ^{were} ~~was~~ perhaps other and sentimental reasons why Major Garnett built his fort here. This was then a desert country and Major Garnett came from lush Virginia. In this little valley in the foot-

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hills of Mt. Adams near the mouth of a canyon stood an oak grove. Here were many springs. The grass was green from spring til fall and wild flowers grew in abundance. Little mountain streams encircled the grove and the trees swarmed with wild canaries. It reminded Major Garnett of home.

The winters were milder here than in the surrounding valleys and spring came earlier. At this cross-road the Indians had met relatives and friends of other tribes. The men talked of hunting and of war. The women learned who had married whom, and of the babies born since they met here the summer before. Under every tree stood a teepee. Sometimes they camped but a night on their way to the mountains to gather and dry berries for the winter. Some camped for weeks, the bucks rising early to go to the canyons to kill grouse, or down on the prairie to kill sage hens or prairie chickens. Young mothers sat beside the brooks, their papouses lying on the grass beside them, while they wove dyed grasses into baskets for the old squaws to gather acorns in, to shell and dry and pound to flour for winter bread.

Where Major Garnett made his parade ground had once been the garden spot of Skloom, brother of Kamiakin, a great Indian chief. The Indians called this camp ground Mool Mool, meaning "Song of the Springs." I have heard old Indians say how sweet it used to be to lie on the grass under an oak tree and hear the springs go "mool - mool - mool".

How the Indians must have loved the white invaders who took their camp ground from them, and slaughtered their game; who confined them on a reservation, and allotted ^{To each} each to eighty acres of land, And then expected gratitude from a people who had found home beside a mountain stream or the great river; on the wide parairie, or in a wooded canyon.

The architect for the buildings at the Fort was a German, a Mr. Scholl.

During our war between the states he went to Washington, D. C., as architect for government projects, and the writer saw a letter of his written while there to a relative in the West. In it he remarks that Americans greatly lack the culture and efficiency of the Germans. He tells how poorly trained and equipped our army was, and that one crack regiment of the Kaiser's could whip both the armies of the north and south in very short order. That point of view was interesting to read at this time. However, Mr. Scholl was a fine young man and a loyal American citizen.

The commandant's house, which Major Garnett built, was said to be a copy of his home in Virginia, and that Virginia home was a copy of his ancestor's home in their loved England. The other officers' homes were Cape Cod cottages, but so harmonious were they with the English home and the surroundings, viewing them now, they look as if they grew in that green grove.

These houses were of stock-brick type. That is, built of bricks, with clapboards on the outside and plastered on the inside. The windows of the commandant's house are casement, with diamond panes. In the glass one can see the colors of the spectrum, and is the sort museums now search for.

The block houses, barracks, and other buildings were built of logs.

After the Fort was completed, Major Garnett went East and brought back with him a bride. She was a cultured and beautiful young girl, and nearly a century later one of her letters describing her life at the Fort was found. Having lived at Fort Simcoe in the early nineties of the last century, after it had been converted into an Indian agency, the life she described there sounded very familiar. She tells of hunting arrowheads on the hills, gathering wild flowers, having guests for dinner, and visiting afterward around the fire in the parlor or on the front veranda, just as

when we lived there
 we had done. She told that when court martial was held, officers from other forts came, bringing their wives with them, and they had parties. They danced the Virginia Reel in the old hall, just as we had.

The Fort was a busy place in those days. There were pack trains constantly coming and going, bringing supplies. Capt. Frederick Dent, brother-in-law of Gen. U. S. Grant, had finished a wagon road between the Dalles and Fort Simcoe and part of the supplies were brought in wagon trains. Scouting detachments were constantly coming and going, and Indian spies in the employ of Maj. Garnett were arriving bringing information of restless bands of Indians.

Fort Simcoe has no stirring historical background. The wars that raged from 1855 to 1857 were over. The subjugation of the Red Man was almost complete, but here and there were bands of Indians with courage enough left to make a last hopeless stand. Kamiakin, the greatest Indian chief of them all, had fled to British Columbia. His brother Skloom, whose home had once been Mool Mool, was in hiding.

The Yakimas were off the beaten track of the white settlers, and they were one of the last Indian tribes to be driven from their lands. In 1854 word had been sent by Gov. Stevens of Washington Territory to the Yakimas that their lands were wanted for white settlements, that they would be paid for their land but if they refused they would be driven off and their lands seized. Up to that time Kamiakin had been the friend of the white men. White settlers had passed thru their country unmolested, and he had steadfastly warned his people against the usual depredations. But when this word

was received, Kamiakin knew that he must make a stand. It had, of course, been futile. Fort Simcoe having been established in 1856 after the Yakimas had surrendered was merely a post to police the lands and furnish a place of refuge in case of trouble. There never was any serious trouble and the relations between the Whites and Indians were for the most part mutually friendly and helpful.

There is an old story current amongst the Indians and old timers, that one day two young officers, named Ulysses Grant and Phil Sheridan, stationed at some other fort, rode up on horse-back on business with Major Barnett. The tale goes that Major Garnett was at the time superintending the planting of the grapevines that afterward covered the house. It seems that the planting didn't go to suit the Major, and that he took over the work himself and Grant and Sheridan helped. Grant held the slips in the hole and Sheridan poured in the water. Major Garnett raked in the dirt while Grant tamped it down with his boot.

I do not know if this story is true, but in the fall of the year when I lived there, we Southern children would gather the grapes and say that we were glad it was Grant and Sheridan who helped plant our grape vines, but if it had been Sherman we would surely have cut them down.

Not long after we came to live at Fort Simcoe, we children were investigating the old house and climbed thru a trap door into the attic. It was full of dust and cobwebs and looked as if it had not been entered for many years. We didn't find anything up there until we came to a chimney in a far corner. There leaning against the chimney were two Eskimo Indian dolls. They were so dusty we thought they must have been standing there since the house was built. We took them downstairs and dusted them and found them in

a very good state of preservation. We named them, most inappropriately, "Peanut" and "Rattlesnake". They were our delight, and we played with them until we wore them out. And this is how we found out where our dolls came from.

One day a young man drove up and after visiting in the agent's office, came home with Father for dinner. He told us he had come to see the place where his grandfather had been stationed as a young lieutenant under Maj. Garnett just before the Civil War. "I have with me his diary that he kept while here. My grandmother," he said, "was a pretty and vivacious Spanish girl, but this diary tells the story of Grandfather's first love." He said Mother might read it to us and copy anything from it that she wished, but please not let the children handle it, as it was old and he treasured it.

As Mother read it aloud we learned that the young officer had fallen deeply in love with the beautiful young wife of his major. He tells how he struggled to hide his secret, and that she seemed utterly unconscious of how her presence stirred him.

April 27, 1858. "Spring is everywhere but in my heart. Today I met her in front of the barracks. She said, "My dear Lieutenant, you are looking wan. Why do you not ask the Major for a leave and go to The Dalles and meet some pretty girls? This is too lonely a life for a young man." And then with boyish bitterness, "She asks me to meet some pretty girls, when my heart is hopelessly pledged to her for all time."

May 16, 1858. "As I passed her house today she was standing near the window. She laughed and waved. My knees went weak as water and my arm shook so I could hardly raise my cap. This is a wicked guilty passion, but it fills my heart with joy and misery."

Taken from an old story

July 18, 1858. "Had dinner at the Major's tonight. Two Hudson's Bay officials were also guests. They brought the baby two ^{Eskimo} Indian dolls. The baby is too little to play with them, but they greatly delighted Mrs. Garnett. She played with them awhile herself, looking so beautiful, then put them on the mantelpiece, side by side. Could she dream as she bade me good-night, standing in the door with her baby in her arms that she seemed to me the fairest flower in God's garden."

Late in July the diary tells that Major Garnett had left with a company of soldiers to try to capture the Indian murderers of some miners in a distant part of the country. Then after an interval the diary says, "Mrs. Garnett has fallen ill of a fever." There is no entry for some time, then it reads that she is much worse, That he has ridden with a pack horse to a canyon on Mt. Adams and brought back ice and snow packed in sawdust.

Three days later she is sinking fast. Late that night he went to her room with the woman who is taking care of her. He writes, "Her hair lay on her pillow like a golden halo, and her eyes were blue as heaven. Once she cried, 'Mother', and later murmured, 'My baby is crying'."

Again for awhile there is no entry, then we learn that Major Garnett arrived home several days after his wife and child were buried.

The diary concludes, "She sleeps in the grove, her little son in her arms, but she will wake with the morning. Jesus, til then, let her dreams have the radiance of her pure heart and golden loveliness."

We could never find her grave, but know that somewhere in the grove, beneath the whisper of leaves and the song of the wild canaries, she dreams her radiant dreams, waiting the morning.

And that is how we found out where our Eskimo dolls came from, but we

Her grave has never been positively located

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whether some soldier put them up in the attic before Major Garnett arrived home, not wishing those toys to be an added pain, or whether they were left in the house and some child played with them and took them to the attic and then forgot them, We will never know, but we did thank the kind Hudson's Bay men whose toys gave us so much joy.

After his wife's death, Major Garnett resigned and left the Fort and went to England to visit the home of his ancestors, but had not been there long when the Civil War broke out in our country. He returned and joined a regiment in the South and was killed in a battle at Carrick's Ford, West Virginia. The Federal commander at this engagement was a Colonel Milroy, afterward General Milroy. After I was grown and married, a son of General Milroy told me that when his father saw the young Southern commander fall from his horse, Colonel Milroy ran to him, and raising the young man in his arms learned from the dying lips his name and afterwards sent the body thru the lines to the Confederates. Years after the war, General Milroy was sent as special agent to the Yakima Indian Reservation and lived at Fort Simcoe, which had then been converted into an Indian Agency. On hearing that the Fort had been established by a Major Garnett, he looked up the records and found that this was the same man whom he had held in his arms for a brief moment, into whose young face he had looked but once, and of whom he learned only his name. But here he learned to know the man.

This is the same man who was killed at Carrick's Ford.

In the way of the sidewalk that ran in front of the Commandant's house stood a particularly fine oak. The tree was quite in the way, but such a lovely one. So Major Garnett had the sidewalk separated and built around

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the tree. I used to watch a pair of lovers, hand in hand, wandering down this walk, and when they came to the big tree they would tug and laugh, each trying to make the other come on his side. ~~The wind fluttering~~ the leaves *fluttering* *in the wind* sounded like the tree was laughing with them. Men used to lean against this tree summer evenings, talking politics. And the tree was always "home", when we children played hide-and-seek. Major Garnett left a green shade of beauty, when he wouldn't cut a tree to lay a straight walk.

The commandant's house, with its perfectly set gables, the New England houses, the little chapel with its steeple, the long log barracks, and the block houses, were a simple part of a beautiful completeness.

When General Milroy, riding across the dusty prairie, could see miles away that dark spot between the hills; that dark spot growing larger with every mile; and when after the day's hard ride in the heat and glare, he and his tired horse were close enough at sunset to see the flag of his country flying over his home, and the Fort, tranquil and deep in ~~the~~ trees, the Northern General began to know the young Southern commander. Sensed the nostalgia that lay behind a Southern home set in a Western wilderness, felt a deep friendliness as he entered Major Garnett's house, and knew that the old Indian trails were not the only roads that crossed here.

About the time of the Civil War the Fort was abandoned as a military post and converted into an Indian Agency. Soldiers were no longer needed to police the lands, and probably the government knew it would need every soldier it could get hold of if it ~~expected~~ to conquer the South.

My father, Judge Lewis T. Erwin, ^{was} appointed Indian Agent in 1893, to serve during Cleveland's second administration and took his family with him. We left our home in the South expecting to live in a wild country and presuming that at least some of us would be scalped by Indians, but from the moment we first laid eyes on it until we waved a misty goodbye four years later, it was for us children the home of our hearts.

We went to school with the Indian children, and loved it. We sailed boats in the little brook, raised wild geese for pets, learned from the Indian children how to make and shoot with bows and arrows. We climbed the apple trees that had grown up on the old parade ground. We hunted arrowheads on the hills, and rode the old trails on Indian cayuses. There couldn't have been a happier, safer, freer place to bring up seven children.

Mother and Father kept open house and had a great many visitors as they had in the South. A good many Southern people had settled on the coast and Fort Simcoe became a sort of Mecca for them. Major Garnett would have liked that. Some of our guests were people who were noted or afterward became so. There was Hugh Wallace, who served as Minister to France during the last world war. There was Hamlin Garland, the novelist. We children roamed the hills with him and told him stories of the early days which I have been told he incorporated in one of his stories. A cousin of the Vanderbilts, Mr.

^{Vander} Vanderbuilt Caesar, was a guest whom we never forgot. He was such fun to play with and taught us lots of songs. Senator James Hamilton Lewis of Illinois, then of Tacoma, visited us, and a sister and nephew of President Cleveland were often our guests.

"The Little Streams of Duna Call Me Home."

After we left the Fort it was nearly half a century before I saw it again, and when I finally visited it, my little granddaughter went with me.

In *we drive a smooth graded*
~~It took us~~ a little less than an hour ~~to drive the road that used to be~~
- drive mud or chuck holes
 nearly a day's journey by horse and buggy ~~over roads that were either deep~~
 in mud, or just as deep in dust and chuck holes. Where we had ridden across
 desert prairie, we now drove between rich farms and fruit orchards. Where
 once grew only sagebrush and sunflowers, were now raised the finest apples
 in the world, and the big baked potato of Northern Pacific fame. The Yakima
 Indian Reservation had flowered into one of the richest agricultural districts
 in the world. There were irrigation systems much larger than the one Father
 had built, but that one was still in operation and called the "Erwin Canal."

It was a warm Spring day. The orchard was in bloom and the oak trees
 not yet in full leaf. But how quiet. The agency and school had been moved to
 Toppenish, thirty miles away, and except for an Indian care-taker, the Fort was
 deserted. Grass grew in the road around the orchard, and the play ground that
 had been kept bare with running feet was covered with weeds. The little church
 where we went to school had long since burned. The grape vines that had
 covered our home were cut down. The old house, still beautiful of line, looked
 bleak and lonely. The veranda where we used to sing summer evenings was cover-
 ed with dust and the steps were sagged and broken.

Sally and I roamed around looking at the houses. Peering thru the windows
 of the doctor's office, we saw on the shelves bottles of medicine, the little
 scales where he measured out his pills, and the chair where I had yelled bloody
 murder while he pulled a tooth, all covered with dust, and looking as if the
 doctor had walked out one evening intending to return the next day.

The iron rings in the jail, where Father Wilbur, an early agent, and
 Methodist evangelist, had thrashed his disobedient Indians, and then prayed
 with them until they were converted, were just as strong as seventy years ago.

XII

We stood beneath the apple tree, the one whose apples ripened first, and whose limbs were so low the littlest one could climb it. A light breeze and there came a flutter of petals. Sally looked like a daffodil in a snow storm.

We hunted for the springs. They were all dry but the one the wild geese played in, and that one only halfway filled its banks, but it's voice still burred faintly, "Mool-Mool-Mool".

In the grove below the Fort we searched for the lady of radiant dreams, but a golden carpet of buttercups covered her secret.

We came to the creek where our ships had sailed so gaily. (Had it always been so small?) We gathered chips of bark and watched them dance away in the sunlight, then went up the hill to the block-house and picked wild flowers, but couldn't find a single arrowhead.

I took her to the grove behind the houses and showed her the tree that had been our post-office. We played together, running from tree to tree, but the stillness quenched our fun. When we were tired, the caretaker gave me the key to my old home.

As we wandered thru the cold, empty rooms, the silence *made us whisper* ~~seemed almost~~ dance. Someone had taken the doors off the Dutch oven, but I told her how Mother once let us bake bread in it.

We climbed the stairs and she slid down the banister. We saw the room where my sister and I had slept in a big swan bed and listened to the coyotees howl. Then we went to Grandma's room. It was a south room, bright and sunny, and did not seem as bare and lonely as the others. I showed her the window where I ^{once} sat ^{great-} beside her great-grandmother and learned, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

We locked the house and went back to the grove to eat our lunch, then lay on the grass, her little hand warm in mine and listened to a meadow lark.

Sally fell asleep and I drowsed, watching pictures that might have come from our old magic lantern. Indian camps under trees. --- Young braves shaping bows and tapering arrows. --- Indian wives tending children. --- Old squaws pounding acorn meats. --- Soldiers marching down the hill from the block-house. --- A gold and white young woman standing in a doorway with a baby in her arms. --- Indian and white children marching two by two into a school house. --- Grandma, whose presence brought beauty, and whose passing left the fragrance of peace. --- A big family around a dinner table with fire-light on their faces. --- White children riding Indian ponies over hills covered with sagebrush and sunflowers.

A wave of joy rose from the depth of early years and surged across my heart. Never again would I see hills so starry with flowers, or trees so green. Never would I hear brooks sing so merrily, or know springs as deep and cool. The sky would never be as heavenly blue, and not again would I know happiness unmixed with sorrow or regret.

As the shadows lengthened, Sally waked. We packed our basket and drove away, leaving the Fort drowsing under a Spring sunset. After we passed the wheatfield I stopped the car and looked back. The last sunbeams touched the trees young green, and apple blossoms waved farewell. How distance softens and time leaves only the happy and beautiful! It was my old home ~~again,~~ wearing flowers on her breast.

*softly sleeping - with
spring flowers on her breast*

And that is the story of the deserted fort for which your good ship

will be named. A fort built at the time when there was tension between our countries due to controversy over the Northwest lands, ^{boundaries} and yet named for a British officer, showing clearly that relatives may disagree, but the deep ties still remain. A fort ^{that} which never knew a war; where the white man and the Indian grew in understanding and friendship, and where white and Indian children played and went to school together in happiness and security.

Before this war started the Colonial Dames of America had started the restoration of Fort Simcoe, the work, of course, having been discontinued for the duration. But after the war is over the work will be finished and we hope the little fort will be exactly as it was in the days of military occupancy. This work will be done for the Indians. They greatly love the spot and it is upon their land and will belong to them. When any Canadian visits this part of the country, we will be happy if they will visit the shrine for which a ship of theirs was named.

It is a matter of great pride and pleasure to us that you are naming one of your ships for our fort, and we will be happy if you would mail to our Chamber of Commerce an account of it's launching, and perhaps a picture of the ship, to place in our museum at Fort Simcoe.

Wishing your ship Godspeed, I am,

Most cordially yours,

Suzanne Verdery Bartholet

Mrs. J. J. Bartholet
June 18, 1943
2201 Summitview Avenue
Yakima, Washington